

Sister Park Agreement

Between St. Croix National Scenic Riverway & Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

BACKGROUND:

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway ("St. Croix") and Mississippi National River and Recreation Area ("Mississippi"), two units of the National Park system with much in common, seek to further cooperation between the two parks in order to better protect, preserve, and promote the parks and their significant natural, cultural and recreational resources.

St. Croix and Mississippi are connected both physically and conceptually, as they share much in the way of natural and cultural resources, recreational opportunities and management issues and challenges. Both parks are nationally important sites for the protection of freshwater resources, which are among the globe's most threatened and least protected ecosystems. Both parks provide breeding areas and stop-over sites for hundreds of species of migratory birds which use the river systems during their annual migrations between breeding and winter habitats. The parks share similar human histories, starting with Native American use, and continuing through European settlement and urban and suburban development. Both parks provide first class recreational resources and educational opportunities within close proximity of the rapidly growing Twin Cities metropolitan area. To a degree that is unusually high even for the National Park Service (NPS), both parks are dependent upon park partners – state and local governments, non-governmental organizations and private landowners, among others – to fulfill their respective missions. Both St. Croix and Mississippi have experienced staff dedicated to their parks and the NPS mission.

Mississippi and St. Croix also face many of the same management challenges – development pressures, pollution, visitor impacts, and even a lack of awareness about the rivers' NPS status. Perhaps most important of all, both parks need to reach out to new audiences and ensure that they and their missions remain relevant to future generations.

The idea of cooperation between the two parks is not a new one. Over the years, staff members from the two parks have done much together, and park partners have conducted projects in both parks. The two parks have worked together on such diverse programs and initiatives as mussel inventories and monitoring, public outreach, law enforcement, informational technology and educational programs. With this agreement, the parks intend to build on this past collaboration, exploit the existing and potential synergies between the two parks, and develop new areas of cooperation between them and among the many park partners. They hope that this agreement can become a model for cooperation between other NPS units and between NPS units and various park partners around the nation and the world.

COOPERATION:

St. Croix and Mississippi have much to share between themselves and with park partners. Opportunities are particularly rich in the areas of interpretation, education, public outreach and resource management, but areas for cooperation are found throughout the parks' programs and divisions. Examples of potential areas of cooperation may include, but are not limited to:

Interpretation, Education and Outreach:

- Joint brochures on specific topics, including mussels, invasive species, migratory birds, land stewardship, etc.
- Joint exhibits at the Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center
- Create "partner site" sign at the Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center including both parks
- Consideration of hiring a seasonal staff member representing both parks, potentially based at the Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center
- Consideration of hiring a joint Public Affairs specialist
- Consideration of sharing other permanent staff
- In cooperation with Resources Management Divisions, host a joint "Bioblitz" at both parks
- Development and staffing of a joint booth at the Minnesota State Fair
- Seek joint funding for educational and outreach activities such as the Science Training and Research Skills (STARS) program and the Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures (UWCA), as well as new initiatives
- Host an "Artist in Residence" at both parks
- Share permanent and seasonal park staff for large events river clean-ups, canoeing events, festivals, etc.
- Assistance in developing the two parks' websites
- Cooperation in such initiatives as "Teacher-Ranger-Teacher" and "Gopher Rangers"
- Share and pool equipment, such as canoes, outdoor kits, etc.
- Development of one or more international "Sister Park" partnerships with protected rivers in other countries

Resources Management

- Mussels inventories and monitoring consideration of training a Mississippi employee in diving in order to join the dive team
- Other inventory and monitoring projects, including eagle surveys
- Joint long-term monitoring and Vital Signs projects
- Pool and share resource management equipment, such as weed wrenches for invasive species work
- Share permanent staff and temporary crews, such as Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) youth groups, to conduct invasive species work
- Consideration of sharing other permanent staff
- In cooperation with Interpretation Divisions, host a Bioblitz in both parks

• Jointly host Inventory and Monitoring "zone meetings"

Administration/Human Resources

- Conduct joint panels for hiring new staff
- Assistance in IT and phone systems

Resources and Visitor Protection

On behalf of St. Croix National Scenic

• St. Croix will continue to provide law enforcement assistance as needed, such as for major events at Mississippi

Maintenance

Though at present Mississippi does not have a Maintenance Division, should that change,
St. Croix could provide assistance in facilities database development and project development

NEXT STEPS

The management teams from both parks will meet in Fall 2010/Winter 2011 to discuss these and other ideas and to develop a one – two year "Action Plan" to begin specific areas of cooperation

Signed at the Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center in Prescott, Wisconsin on this 24th day of September 2010.

On behalf of Mississinni National River

Riverway	and Recreation Area
SUPERINTENDENT	SUPERINTENDENT